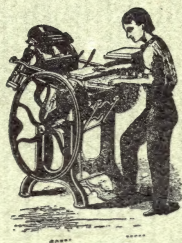
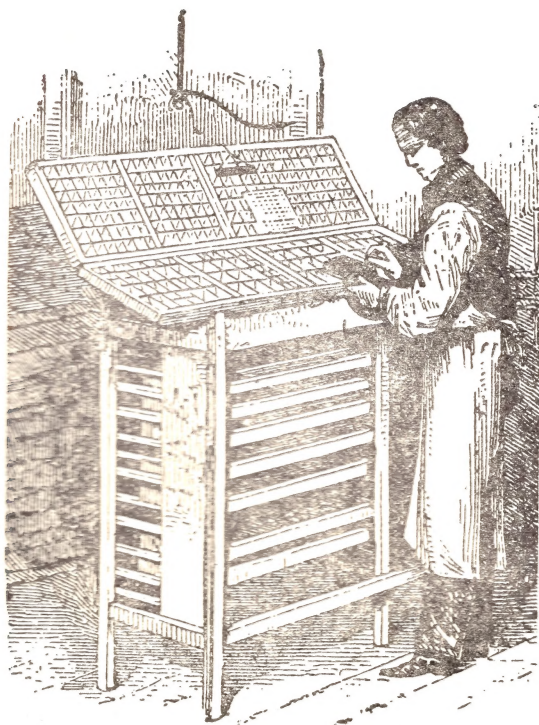


**Verses on Printing by Printers**  
(1850-1900)







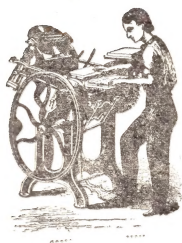


Setting Type by Gaslight in the 1860s

**Verses on Printing by Printers**  
(1850-1900)

*Compiled by*  
**EUGENE SCHEINMAN**

**Illustrated**



Bronx  
**The Norgen Press**  
1950

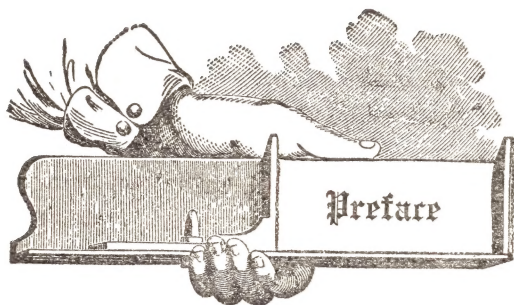
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Printed in the United States of America

To  
New York  
Typographical Union  
Number Six







THE COMPILER of this presentation has been collecting verses about the art of printing for some time—limiting himself exclusively to those written by American printers. He has restricted himself thus with the idea constantly in mind that the printer, more than anyone else, is able to reveal the spirit and genuine atmosphere of his craft. Numerous verses on this subject have been written by very talented non-printer writers, perhaps with better technique and more finesse, but, in spite of this, they lack that intimate something expressed by the printer-versifier.

In seeking for his objects, this collector had to search through various types of literature of different periods—gathering his findings from such broadly divergent

sources as handbills, type specimen books, printers' instruction manuals, volumes of poetry, newspapers, and even unpublished manuscripts; because, as far as he knows, there is no anthology of verses written by printers about their craft.

Of course, the fugitive verses he found run the whole gamut of human emotions, truly mirroring the circumstances and consequent moods of the times in which they were composed. They are of tremendous historic interest, being primary evidence in the story of the printer's growth.

Up to the opening decades of the nineteenth century the working printer's lot was especially unhappy. He worked long, debilitating hours, in dirty, poorly aired places, for small remuneration. Therefore, his living environment was squalid and he was subject to many ailments. His writing reflected his plight vividly and showed a somewhat pessimistic view of life.

Then came a new, promising epoch for the printer. Gradually, with the incidence of printers' organizations his condition bettered. Further, with the birth of the National Typographical Union in 1852

(which, in 1869, became what is now the International Typographical Union), the printer's situation brightened considerably—economically and spiritually.

This modest volume contains selections only from the period of transition which followed the Union's origin and extended to about the start of this century. These selections depict the fine pride the printer has in his art and clearly indicate that with steady improvements in his circumstances his verses became much more optimistic in tone, often having a humorous quality.

On the eve of the centennial celebration (May 5-14) of New York Typographical Union Number Six, the compiler, one of its proud members, thinks it appropriate to proffer these verses as a tribute to his Union's greatness.



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## Setting Type

*Franklin J. Ottarson*

Hark to the click  
Of the types in the stick!  
They fall and they meet with  
monotonous sound,  
As swiftly the fingers that seize  
them go round  
To hurry them into the stick,  
With a click, click.

There they are in the stick!  
What do the types tell the world  
as they stand?  
Here it is satire; there eloquence grand.  
Weak as nothing when single,  
combined they command  
A wonder-power in their click,  
As to order they march in the stick.

Look again in the stick.  
To the workers of evil they  
sorrow betide;  
The cheat and oppressor in  
vain try to glide  
Away from the click, but the  
earth cannot hide

Them away from the click, click,  
Of the types falling into the stick.

As they click, click, in the stick,  
Monarchs and tyrants their marshaling  
dread;

They know that to freedom the types  
have been wed,

And the visions they see are in color  
blood-red,

And they shake at the sound of the  
click.

Hark, the noise from the stick!  
Guilt flies from the sound in a  
tremor of fear;

But guilt cannot hide in the day  
or the night,

Though it try every method of  
hiding or flight

From the sound of that terrible click.

Forever that click, click!

In the gas that makes day-shine, or in  
the sun's light,

That click is increasing forever its might,  
And seeming to say: "Here we stand  
for the right!

Oppressors, beware of the stick!"



Those gray-colored types in the stick!  
States, monarchies, potentates,  
    pachas and kings,  
The painter, the player, the poet  
    who sings,  
Stand in awe of those poor, little,  
    dull, leaden things,  
And the ominous noise of the click.

But these types in the stick,  
To the just and the true all the  
    nations around,  
To the whole of mankind where  
    the virtues abound—  
Most welcome to such is the musical sound  
Of the types with their click.



Composing Room of the 1880s

Oh! If There Were No Printers,  
What Would the People Do?

*E. M. Heist*

The Printers! Ho! I sing to them!  
I dedicate this lay,  
To those who ply the noble Art, which,  
like the sun's bright ray,  
Gives light and happiness to all,  
and shines the wide world through;  
Oh! if there were no Printers, what  
would the people do?

The Politician, then, indeed, would  
be a sorry thing,  
For there would be no daily sheet election  
news to bring,  
And he would have to wait for it perhaps  
a month or two;  
Oh! if there were no Printers, what  
would the gossips do?

The Senator and the Member, too, might  
bid farewell to fame,  
Were not one found to print their  
thoughts and mighty deeds proclaim  
Their speeches made for "Buncombe"  
they'll find to be "no go"!

Oh! if there were no Printers, what would  
our wise men do?

The Poet and the Novelist might lay  
aside their quill—

Give up their toil and study, and bid their  
brains be still;

For who would read their manuscripts, or  
even look them through?

Oh! if there were no Printers, what would  
our authors do?

The merchant every day might get new  
styles and fresh supplies;

But were no papers found wherein to  
advertise,

He'd find his stock grow very large—  
his dollars very few—

Oh! if there were no Printers, what  
would the tradesmen do?

The ladies, too—God shield them well,  
and bless each gentle heart!—

How would they grieve, if to the world  
was lost the Printer's art:

For would come no magazines each  
month with *Fashions* news;

Oh! if there were no Printers, what would  
the dear ones do?



Then, honor to the Printers to whom  
I give this lay!—  
To those who ply the noble Art, which,  
like the sun's bright ray,  
Gives light and happiness to all, and  
shines the wide world through;  
For, if there were no Printers, *what*  
would the people do?



## A Hont of Type

*Walt Whitman*

This latent mine—these unlaunch'd voices  
—passionate powers,  
Wrath, argument, or praise, or comic leer,  
or prayer devout  
(not nonpareil, brevier, bourgeois, long  
primer merely),  
These ocean waves arousable to fury  
and to death,  
Or sooth'd to ease and sheeny sun  
and sleep  
Within the pallid slivers slumbering.

## The Merits of Printing

Joel Munsell

When learning and science were both  
sunk in night,

And genius and freedom were  
banished outright,

The invention of Printing soon  
brought all to light!

Then carol the praises of Printing  
And sing in that noble art's praise.

Then all who profess the great  
heaven-sent art,

And have liberty, virtue and  
knowledge at heart,

Come join in these verses and all  
bear a part,

To carol the praises of Printing  
And sing in that noble  
art's praise.

Tho' every *composer* a *galley* must have,  
Yet judge not from that a composer's  
a slave,

For printing hath often dug tyranny's  
grave,

Then carol (etc.)

If *correction* he needs, all mankind  
                  does the same,  
When he *quadrates* his matter he is  
                  not to blame,  
For to *justification* he lays a strong claim,  
      Then carol (etc.)

Tho' he daily *imposes* 'tis not to  
                  do wrong—  
Like Nimrod he follows the *chase*  
                  all day long,  
And always to him a good *slice*  
                  does belong,  
      Then carol (etc.)

Tho' friendly to peace, yet French  
                  *canon* he loves,  
Expert in his *great* and his  
                  *long primer* he proves,  
And with skill and address all  
                  his *furniture* moves,  
      Then carol (etc.)

Tho' no antiquarian he deals much  
                  in *quoins*,  
And freedom with loyalty  
                  closely combines,  
And to the republic of letters he joins,  
      Then carol (etc.)

Extremes he avoids and a *medium* invites,  
Tho' no blockhead he often in  
                    *foolscap* delights,  
And handles his shooting-stick tho'  
                    he never fights,  
Then carol (etc.)

But the art to complete the stout  
                    *pressmen* must come,  
And make use of their *balls*, *frisket* and  
                    *drum*,  
And to strike an *impression*, the  
                    *platen* full home,  
Then carol (etc.)

But as the old proverb declares very clear,  
We're farthest from God when the  
                    church we are near,  
So in all printing *chapels* do *devils* appear,  
Then carol (etc.)

On the press truth, religion and  
                    learning depend  
Whilst that remains free, slavery ne'er  
                    gains its end,  
Then a *bodkin* in him who is not  
                    printing's friend,  
And carol the praises of printing,  
And sing in that noble art's praise.

## The Printer's Devil

### *Lon Hoding*

Ink-bespattered, clothing tattered,  
With his broom in hand;  
Leaning, cleaning, rubbing, scrubbing,  
Under every stand.

'Neath the cases, type and spaces—  
Trampled where they fell—  
By this Pluto doomed to go to  
Printer's leather "hell."

Running hither, darting thither,  
Tail of all the staff;  
Out and in doors, doing all chores,  
Bringing telegraph

Runs for copy—nor dares stop he  
For his proper hat;  
All the jour' men, save the foreman,  
Calling for the "fat."

"Proofs" the galleys, then he sallies,  
On satanic pinion,  
From the news-room to the sanctum—  
Part of his dominion.

And the bosses—sometimes cross as  
Bears within their holes



Make the devil find his level  
Stirring up the coals.

Washing roller, bringing coal, or  
Lugging water-pail;  
Time he wastes not at the paste-pot,  
Wrapping up the mail.

When the week's done, then he seeks one  
Where the greenbacks lay,  
There to settle, for the little  
Devil is to pay.

In this spirit there is merit,  
Far from taint of shame;  
Often gaining, by his training,  
Good and honored name.

Legislators, great debaters,  
Scientific men,  
Have arisen from the prison  
Of the printer's den.



## Wail of the Proofreader

Lafayette F. Thomas

With fingers weary and worn,  
And nose quite puffy and red,  
A proofreader sat in his old linen coat,  
With a snortling cold in his head.  
With handkerchief in his left,  
And pen in his dexter paw,  
The miserable man first blew his nose,  
Then let loose his jaw:  
Read! read! read!  
With the tears rolling down from my eyes;  
Read! read! read!  
Till I can't tell *l*'s from *i*'s.  
Read! read! read!  
In plain confusion and noise;  
And bored by a voice of dolorous pitch  
Belonging to one of the *boys*.  
Read! read! read!  
In the story next to the roof;  
Read! read! read!  
Till the soul is lost in the *proof*.  
It's oh to be a Hot-  
tentot in the burning sand,  
Where never an author sent a lot  
Of manuscript the *devil* could not

(Nor even the *reader*) understand!  
Read! read! read!  
Till my weary spirits sink;  
And mark! mark! mark!  
While life ebbs with the ink.  
French, and Latin, and Greek!  
Spanish, Italian, and Dutch!  
Poring o'er all till my eyes grow weak  
And I seem to be, by fancy's freak,  
But a part of the pen I clutch.  
Oh, but to *dele* work!  
To *transpose* toil for rest!  
To *make up* life's remaining years  
On smiling nature's breast!  
A *space* of time to join the *chase*,  
Some *quoins* to see me through:  
A short *fat take* at least I want;  
A few small notes might do.  
Oh for a brief respite  
From toilsome pen and proof!  
An *out* while I might calmly seek  
A *doublet* who would share my roof;  
The *sort* that could  
    *correct my form*  
And save me from life's many traps,  
And round our *table* smiling *set*  
Sweet *fat-faced Minion* in *small caps*!

## The Printer's Toil

*L. B. Thompson*

Blow, ye stormy winds of winter,  
Drive the frigid, drifting snow;  
Closely housed, the busy printer  
Heeds not how the winds may blow.

Click and tick, his type go dropping  
Here and there within his case,  
As he stands, industrious, popping  
Every letter in its place.

Heaven send the useful printer  
Every comfort mortals need;  
For our nights were dull in winter  
Had we not the news to read.

Sad would be the world's condition  
If no printers here were found;  
Ignorance and superstition,  
Sin and suffering would abound.

Yea, it is the patient printer  
Rolls the car of knowledge on,  
And a gloomy mental winter  
Soon would reign if he were gone.

Some their fingers scarcely soiling  
In perhaps a prouder place,

Are less worth than typos toiling  
For their bread before the case.  
Yet, while type they're daily setting,  
Oft some thoughtless popinjay  
Is departing, and forgetting  
Printers whom he owes to pay.  
Oh, ungrateful soul, how blindly  
Do you aye about you coil  
Griefs to visit you unkindly  
If you cheat the printer's toil.  
There, behold him, never lazy,  
Handling type before the case,  
Toiling till he's almost crazy,  
To exalt the human race.



### The Press

*William O. Bourne*

A million tongues are there, and  
they are heard  
Speaking of hopes to nations,  
in the prime  
Of freedom's day, to hasten  
on the time

When the wide world of spirit  
    shall be stirred  
With higher aims than now—when  
    man shall call  
    Each man his brother—each  
    shall tell to each  
    His tale of love, and pure  
    and holy speech  
Be music for the soul's high festival;  
Thy gentle notes are heard,  
    like choral waves,  
    Reaching the mountain, hill,  
    and quiet vale—  
    Thy thunder-tones are like the  
    sweeping gale,  
Bidding the tribes of men no  
    more be slaves;  
And earth's remotest island  
    hears the sound  
That floats on ether wings  
    the earth around!

## The Lay of the Printshop

*Anonymous*

Who gives instructions clear as mud,  
And when your art begins to bud  
Who "jumps upon you" with a thud?

*The Foreman*

Who in one hollow wedge-shaped line  
Can fifty frightful "bulls" combine,  
Reset and make them worse each time?

*The Operator*

To lift whose ads you can't begin,  
And who, with self-complacent grin,  
Leaves out the words that "won't go in"?

*The Adman*

Who marks the commas just for fun,  
And when the job is nearly run  
Finds errors plain as noonday sun?

*The Proofreader*

Who so abhors monotony,  
Each page a different length must be?  
Who hides his string-ends carefully?

*The Make-up*

Who bends the chase like cupid's bow,  
And when the type moves to and fro,



Who plugs a quad and lets her go?

*The Stoneman*

Who puts the form on wrong-end to,  
Who sets his guides a mile askew  
And can't tell pink from prussian blue?

*The Pressman*

When quoin or key on half-tone lies,  
Who starts the press with dreaming eyes  
And feeds the sheets in cornerwise?

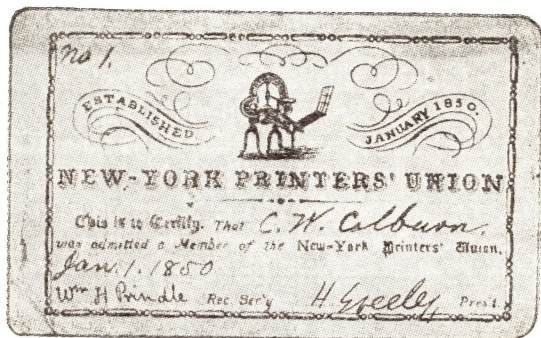
*The Feeder*

Who cleans the brayer with a spade  
And thinks he knows the bloomin' trade;  
Whose ways are in his name betrayed?

*The Devil*

Who sweetly lauds his fellow's art,  
And flawlessly performs his part;  
Whose work defies the critic's dart?  
*Why, I don't believe I've met the  
gentleman*





Reproduction (reduced) of the very first working card issued by Horace Greeley, the first president of New-York Printers' Union. (Obverse and reverse sides.)

PAYMENTS OF DUES, &c.				
YEAR	DAY	\$	CTS	FINANCIAL SECRETARY.
1850	April 1	1	62½	R. Cunningham
1850	Oct 1	1	25	R. Cunningham
1851	Jan 1	1	62½	R. Cunningham
1851	April 1	1	62½	R. Cunningham
1851	July 1	1	62½	R. Cunningham
1851	Oct 1	1	62½	R. Cunningham
1852	Jan 1	1	62½	R. Cunningham
1852	April 1	1	50	R. Cunningham





